

Stalinism

Stalinism is the means of governing and policies which were implemented in the Soviet Union from 1927 to 1953 by Joseph Stalin. It included the creation of a one-party totalitarian police state; rapid industrialization; the theory of socialism in one country; collectivization of agriculture; intensification of the class struggle under socialism; a cult of personality^{[1][2]} and subordination of the interests of foreign communist parties to those of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, deemed by Stalinism to be the leading vanguard party of communist revolution at the time.^[3]

Stalin's regime forcibly purged society of what it saw as threats to itself and its brand of communism (so-called "enemies of the people"), which included political dissidents, non-Soviet nationalists, the bourgeoisie, better-off peasants ("kulaks"),^[4] and those of the working class who demonstrated "counter-revolutionary" sympathies.^[5] This resulted in mass repression of such people as well as their families, including mass arrests, show trials, executions, and imprisonment in forced labor and concentration camps known as gulags.^[6] The most notable examples of this were the Great Purge and the Dekulakization campaign. Stalinism was also marked by mass religious persecution,^{[7][8]} and ethnic cleansing through forced deportations.^[9] Some historians such as Robert Service have blamed Stalinist policies, particularly the collectivization policies, for causing famines such as the Holodomor.^[7] Other historians and scholars disagree on the role of Stalinism.^[10]

Officially designed to accelerate development towards communism, the need for industrialization in the Soviet Union was emphasized because the Soviet Union had previously fallen behind economically compared to Western countries, and that socialist society needed industry to face the challenges posed by internal and external enemies of communism.^{[11]:70–71} Rapid industrialization was accompanied by mass collectivization of agriculture and by rapid urbanization, the latter of which converted many small villages into industrial cities.^{[11]:70–79} To accelerate the development of industrialization, Stalin imported materials, ideas, expertise, and workers from western Europe and the United States,^[12] pragmatically setting up joint-venture contracts with major American private enterprises such as the Ford Motor Company, which under state supervision assisted in developing the basis of the industry of the Soviet economy from the late 1920s to the 1930s.^[13] After the American private enterprises had completed their tasks, Soviet state enterprises took over.^[13]

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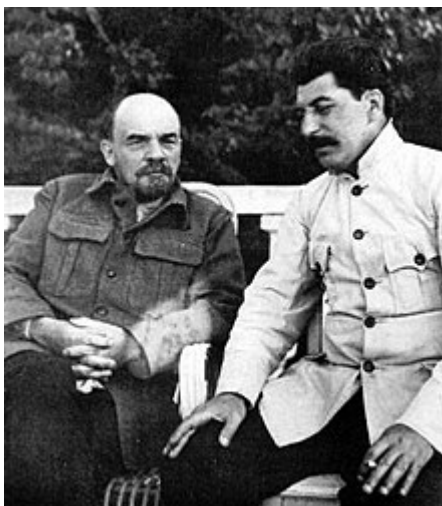
History

Stalinism is used to describe the period during which [Joseph Stalin](#) was [leader](#) of the [Soviet Union](#) while serving as [General Secretary](#) of the [Central Committee](#) of the [Communist Party of the Soviet Union](#) from 1922 to his death on 5 March 1953.^[14]

Etymology

The term *Stalinism* came into prominence during the mid-1930s when [Lazar Kaganovich](#), a Soviet politician and associate of Stalin, reportedly declared: "Let's replace Long Live [Leninism](#) with Long Live Stalinism!"^[15] Stalin dismissed this as excessively praiseful and contributing to a [cult of personality](#).^[15]

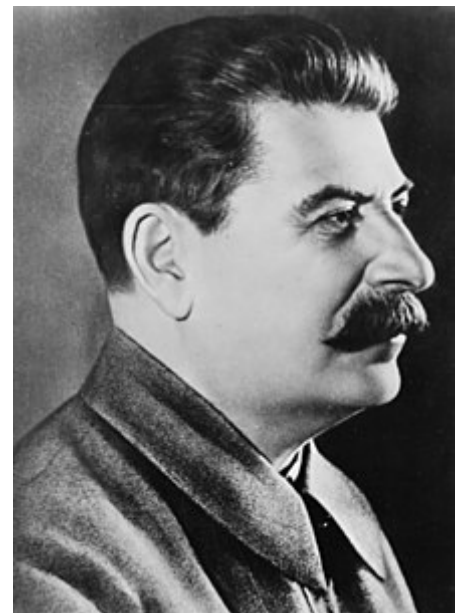
Stalinist policies



Modified photo intended to show [Vladimir Lenin](#) with Stalin in the early 1920s^{[16][17]}

While some historians view Stalinism as a reflection of the ideologies of [Leninism](#) and [Marxism](#), some argue that it stands separate from the socialist ideals it stemmed from. After a political struggle that culminated in the defeat of the [Bukharinists](#) (the "Party's [Right Tendency](#)"), Stalinism was free to shape policy without opposition, ushering forth an era of harsh [authoritarianism](#) that worked toward rapid [industrialization](#) regardless of the cost.^[18]

From 1917 to 1924, though often appearing united, Stalin, [Vladimir Lenin](#), and [Leon Trotsky](#) had discernible ideological differences. In his dispute with Trotsky, Stalin de-emphasized the role of workers in advanced [capitalist countries](#) (e.g. he considered the [American working-class](#) "bourgeoisified" [labor](#)



[Joseph Stalin](#), after which Stalinism is named, referring to his doctrines and policies implemented (1927–1953)



Members of the Communist Party of China celebrating Stalin's birthday in 1949

aristocracy). Stalin also polemicized against Trotsky on the role of peasants as in China, whereas Trotsky's position was in favor of urban insurrection over peasant-based guerrilla warfare.

All other October Revolution 1917 Bolshevik leaders regarded their revolution more or less just as the beginning, with Russia as the springboard on the road towards the World Wide Revolution. Stalin would eventually introduce the idea of socialism in one country by the autumn of 1924, a theory not only standing in sharp contrast to Trotsky's permanent revolution but to all earlier socialistic theses just as well. The revolution, however, did not spread outside of Russia as Lenin had assumed it soon would. Not even within other former territories of the Russian Empire—such as Poland, Finland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia—had the revolution been a success. On the contrary, all of these countries had returned to capitalist bourgeois

rule.^[19]

Despite this, by the autumn of 1924, Stalin's notion of socialism in Soviet Russia was initially considered next to blasphemy in the ears of other Politburo members, including Zinoviev and Kamenev to the intellectual left; Rykov, Bukharin, and Tomsky to the pragmatic right; and the powerful Trotsky, who belonged to no side but his own. None would even think of Stalin's concept as a potential addition to communist ideology. Stalin's socialism in one country doctrine could not be imposed until he, himself, had become close to being the autocratic ruler of the Soviet Union around 1929. Bukharin and the Right Opposition expressed their support for imposing Stalin's ideas, as Trotsky had been exiled, whereas Zinoviev and Kamenev had been thrown out of the party.^[20]

Proletarian state

Traditional communist thought holds that the state will gradually "wither away", as the implementation of socialism reduces class distinction. However, Stalin argued that the proletarian state (as opposed to the bourgeois state) must become stronger before it can wither away. In Stalin's view, counter-revolutionary elements will attempt to derail the transition to full communism, and the state must be powerful enough to defeat them. For this reason, Communist regimes influenced by Stalin have been widely described as totalitarian.^[21]

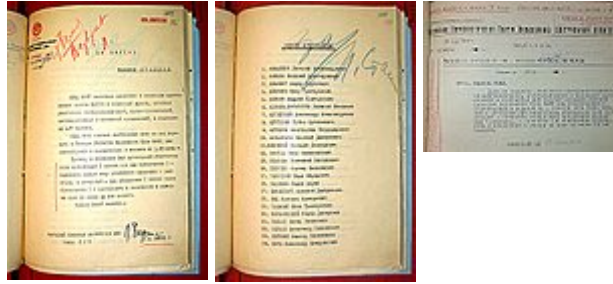
Sheng Shicai, a Chinese warlord with Communist leanings, invited Soviet intervention and allowed Stalinist rule to be extended to the Xinjiang province in the 1930s. In 1937, Sheng conducted a purge similar to the Great Purge, imprisoning, torturing, and killing about 100,000 people, many of whom were Uyghurs.^{[22][23]}

Class-based violence

Stalin blamed the kulaks as the inciters of reactionary violence against the people during the implementation of agricultural collectivisation.^[24] In response, the state under Stalin's leadership initiated a violent campaign against the kulaks. This kind of campaign would later be known as classicide,^[25] though several international legislatures have passed resolutions declaring the campaign a genocide.^[26] However, some historians dispute that these actions constitute genocide.^{[27][28][29]}

Purges and executions

As head of the Politburo of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Stalin consolidated near-absolute power



Left: Lavrenty Beria's January 1940 letter to Stalin asking permission to execute 346 "enemies of the Communist Party and of the Soviet authorities" who conducted "counter-revolutionary, right-Trotskyite plotting and spying activities"

Middle: Stalin's handwriting: "3a" (support)

Right: the Politburo's decision is signed by Stalin

in the 1930s with a Great Purge of the party that claimed to expel "opportunists" and "counter-revolutionary infiltrators."^{[30][31]} Those targeted by the purge were often expelled from the party, though more severe measures ranged from banishment to the Gulag labor camps to execution after trials held by NKVD troikas.^{[30][32][33]}

In the 1930s, Stalin apparently became increasingly worried about the growing popularity of the Leningrad party head Sergei Kirov. At the 1934 Party Congress where the vote for the new Central Committee was held, Kirov received only three negative votes (the fewest of any candidate) while Stalin received at least over a hundred negative votes.^{[34][i]} After the assassination of Kirov, which may have been orchestrated by Stalin, Stalin invented a detailed scheme to implicate opposition leaders in the murder, including Trotsky, Lev Kamenev, and Grigory Zinoviev.^[35] From thereon, the investigations and trials expanded.^[36] Stalin passed a new law on "terrorist organizations and terrorist acts" that were to be investigated for no more than ten days, with no prosecution, defense attorneys or appeals, followed by a sentence to be executed "quickly."^[37]

Thereafter, several trials, known as the Moscow Trials, were held, but the procedures were replicated throughout the country. Article 58 of the legal code, which listed prohibited anti-Soviet activities as a counter-revolutionary crime, was applied in the broadest manner.^[38] Many alleged anti-Soviet pretexts were used to brand individuals as "enemies of the people", starting the cycle of public persecution, often proceeding to interrogation, torture, and deportation, if not death. The Russian word troika thereby gained a new meaning: a quick, simplified trial by a committee of three subordinated to NKVD troika—with sentencing carried out within 24 hours.^[37] Stalin's hand-picked executioner Vasili Blokhin was entrusted with carrying out some of the high-profile executions in this period.^[39]

Many military leaders were convicted of treason, and a large-scale purge of Red Army officers followed.^[ii] The repression of so many formerly high-ranking revolutionaries and party members led Leon Trotsky to claim that a "river of blood" separated Stalin's regime from that of Lenin.^[41] In August 1940, Trotsky was assassinated in Mexico, where he had lived in exile since January 1937—this eliminated the last of Stalin's opponents among the former Party leadership.^[42] With the exception of Vladimir Milyutin (who died in prison in 1937) and Stalin himself, all of the members of Lenin's original cabinet who had not succumbed to death from natural causes before the purge were executed.

Mass operations of the NKVD also targeted "national contingents" (foreign ethnicities) such as Poles, ethnic Germans, and Koreans. A total of 350,000 (144,000 of them Poles) were arrested and 247,157 (110,000 Poles) were executed.^[43] Many Americans who had emigrated to the Soviet Union during the worst of the Great Depression were executed, while others were sent to prison camps or gulags.^{[44][45]} Concurrent with the

purges, efforts were made to rewrite the history in Soviet textbooks and other propaganda materials. Notable people executed by NKVD were removed from the texts and photographs as though they never existed. Gradually, the history of revolution was transformed into a story about just two key characters, i.e. Lenin and Stalin.

In light of revelations from Soviet archives, historians now estimate that nearly 700,000 people (353,074 in 1937 and 328,612 in 1938) were executed in the course of the terror,^[46] with the great mass of victims merely "ordinary" Soviet citizens: workers, peasants, homemakers, teachers, priests, musicians, soldiers, pensioners, ballerinas, and beggars.^{[47][48]:4} Many of the executed were interred in mass graves, with some of the major killing and burial sites being Bykivnia, Kurapaty, and Butovo.^[49]

Some Western experts believe the evidence released from the Soviet archives is understated, incomplete or unreliable.^{[50][51][52][53][54]} Conversely, historian Stephen G. Wheatcroft, who spent a good portion of his academic career researching the archives, contends that, prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the opening of the archives for historical research, "our understanding of the scale and the nature of Soviet repression has been extremely poor" and that some specialists who wish to maintain earlier high estimates of the Stalinist death toll are "finding it difficult to adapt to the new circumstances when the archives are open and when there are plenty of irrefutable data" and instead "hang on to their old Sovietological methods with round-about calculations based on odd statements from emigres and other informants who are supposed to have superior knowledge."^{[55][56]}



"Wall of sorrow" at the first exhibition of the victims of Stalinism in Moscow, 19 November 1988

Stalin personally signed 357 proscription lists in 1937 and 1938 that condemned to execute some 40,000 people, about 90% of whom are confirmed to have been shot.^[57] At the time, while reviewing one such list, he reportedly muttered to no one in particular: "Who's going to remember all this riff-raff in ten or twenty years time? No one. Who remembers the names now of the boyars Ivan the Terrible got rid of? No one."^[58] In addition, Stalin dispatched a contingent of NKVD operatives to Mongolia, established a Mongolian version of the NKVD *troika*, and unleashed a bloody purge in which tens of thousands were executed as "Japanese spies", as Mongolian ruler Khorloogiin Choibalsan closely followed Stalin's lead.^{[48]:2}

During the 1930s and 1940s, the Soviet leadership sent NKVD squads into other countries to murder defectors and other opponents of the Soviet regime. Victims of such plots included Yevhen Konovalets, Ignace Poretsky, Rudolf Klement, Alexander Kutepov, Evgeny Miller, Leon Trotsky, and the Workers' Party of Marxist Unification (POUM) leadership in Catalonia (e.g. Andréu Nin Pérez).^[59]

Deportations

Shortly before, during, and immediately after World War II, Stalin conducted a broad-scale series of deportations that profoundly affected the ethnic map of the Soviet Union. Separatism, resistance to Soviet rule, and collaboration with the invading Germans were cited as the official reasons for the deportations. Individual circumstances of those spending time in German-occupied territories were not examined. After the brief Nazi occupation of the Caucasus, the entire population of five of the small highland peoples and the Crimean Tatars—more than a million people in total—were deported without notice or any opportunity to take their possessions.^[60]

As a result of Stalin's lack of trust in the loyalty of particular ethnicities, ethnic groups such as the Soviet Koreans, Volga Germans, Crimean Tatars, Chechens, and many Poles, were forcibly moved out of strategic areas and relocated to places in the central Soviet Union, especially Kazakhstan in Soviet Central Asia. By

some estimates, hundreds of thousands of deportees may have died en route.^[61] It is estimated that between 1941 and 1949 nearly 3.3 million^{[61][62]} were deported to Siberia and the Central Asian republics. By some estimates, up to 43% of the resettled population died of diseases and malnutrition.^[63]

According to official Soviet estimates, more than 14 million people passed through the gulags from 1929 to 1953, with a further 7 to 8 million being deported and exiled to remote areas of the Soviet Union (including entire nationalities in several cases).^[64] The emergent scholarly consensus is that from 1930 to 1953, around 1.5 to 1.7 million perished in the gulag system.^{[65][66][67]}

In February 1956, Nikita Khrushchev condemned the deportations as a violation of Leninism and reversed most of them, although it was not until 1991 that the Tatars, Meskhetians, and Volga Germans were allowed to return *en masse* to their homelands. The deportations had a profound effect on the peoples of the Soviet Union. The memory of the deportations has played a major part in the separatist movements in the Baltic states, Tatarstan and Chechnya even today.

Economic policy

At the start of the 1930s, Stalin launched a wave of radical economic policies that completely overhauled the industrial and agricultural face of the Soviet Union. This came to be known as the Great Turn as Russia turned away from the near-capitalist New Economic Policy (NEP) and instead adopted a command economy. The NEP had been implemented by Lenin in order to ensure the survival of the socialist state following seven years of war (World War I, 1914–1917, and the subsequent Civil War, 1917–1921) and had rebuilt Soviet production to its 1913 levels. However, Russia still lagged far behind the West, and the NEP was felt by Stalin and the majority of the Communist Party, not only to be compromising communist ideals but also not delivering sufficient economic performance as well as not creating the envisaged socialist society. It was felt necessary to increase the pace of industrialization in order to catch up with the West.



Starved peasants on a street in Kharkiv during the Soviet famine of 1932–1933

Fredric Jameson has said that "Stalinism was...a success and fulfilled its historic mission, socially as well as economically" given that it "modernized the Soviet Union, transforming a peasant society into an industrial state with a literate population and a remarkable scientific superstructure."^[68] Robert Conquest disputed such a conclusion, noting that "Russia had already been fourth to fifth among industrial economies before World War I" and that Russian industrial advances could have been achieved without collectivization, famine, or terror. According to Conquest, the industrial successes were far less than claimed, and the Soviet-style industrialization was "an anti-innovative dead-end."^[69] Stephen Kotkin said those who argue collectivization was necessary are "dead wrong", arguing that such "only seemed necessary within the straitjacket of Communist ideology and its repudiation of capitalism. And economically, collectivization failed to deliver." Kotkin further claimed that it decreased harvests instead of increasing them.^[70]

According to several Western historians,^[71] Stalinist agricultural policies were a key factor in causing the Soviet famine of 1932–1933, which the Ukrainian government now calls the Holodomor, recognizing it as an act of genocide. Some scholars dispute the intentionality of the famine.^{[72][73]}

Relationship to Leninism

Stalin considered the political and economic system under his rule to be Marxism–Leninism, which he considered the only legitimate successor of Marxism and Leninism. The historiography of Stalin is diverse, with many different aspects of continuity and discontinuity between the regimes Stalin and Lenin proposed. Some historians, such as Richard Pipes, consider Stalinism as the natural consequence of Leninism, that Stalin "faithfully implemented Lenin's domestic and foreign policy programs."^[74] Robert Service notes that "institutionally and ideologically Lenin laid the foundations for a Stalin [...]" but the passage from Leninism to the worse terrors of Stalinism was not smooth and inevitable."^[75] Likewise, historian and Stalin biographer Edvard Radzinsky believes that Stalin was a real follower of Lenin, exactly as he claimed himself.^[76] Another Stalin biographer, Stephen Kotkin, wrote that "his violence was not the product of his subconscious but of the Bolshevik engagement with Marxist–Leninist ideology."^[77]

Dmitri Volkogonov, who wrote biographies of both Lenin and Stalin, explained that during the 1960s through 1980s an official patriotic Soviet de-Stalinized view of the Lenin–Stalin relationship (i.e. during the Khrushchev Thaw and later) was that the overly-autocratic Stalin had distorted the Leninism of the wise dedushka Lenin. However, Volkogonov also lamented that this view eventually dissolved for those like him who had the scales fall from their eyes in the years immediately before and after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. After researching the biographies in the Soviet archives, he came to the same conclusion as Radzinsky and Kotkin, i.e. that Lenin had built a culture of violent autocratic totalitarianism, of which Stalinism was a logical extension. He lamented that, while Stalin had long since fallen in the estimation of many Soviet minds (the many who agreed with de-Stalinization), "Lenin was the last bastion" in Volkogonov's mind to fall and the fall was the most painful, given the secular apotheosis of Lenin that all Soviet children grew up with.

Proponents of continuity cite a variety of contributory factors, in that it was Lenin, rather than Stalin, whose civil war measures introduced the Red Terror with its hostage-taking and internment camps; that it was Lenin who developed the infamous Article 58 and who established the autocratic system within the Communist Party.^[78] They also note that Lenin put a ban on factions within the Russian Communist Party and introduced the one-party state in 1921—a move that enabled Stalin to get rid of his rivals easily after Lenin's death and cite Felix Dzerzhinsky, who, during the Bolshevik struggle against opponents in the Russian Civil War, exclaimed: "We stand for organized terror—this should be frankly stated."^[79]

Opponents of this view include revisionist historians and a number of post-Cold War and otherwise dissident Soviet historians including Roy Medvedev, who argues that although "one could list the various measures carried out by Stalin that were actually a continuation of anti-democratic trends and measures implemented under Lenin...in so many ways, Stalin acted, not in line with Lenin's clear instructions, but in defiance of them."^[80] In doing so, some historians have tried to distance Stalinism from Leninism in order to undermine the totalitarian view that the negative facets of Stalin were inherent in communism from the start.^[81] Critics of this kind include anti-Stalinist communists such as Leon Trotsky, who pointed out that Lenin attempted to persuade the Communist Party to remove Stalin from his post as its General Secretary. Lenin's Testament, the document which contained this order, was suppressed after Lenin's death. In his biography of Trotsky, British historian Isaac Deutscher says that, on being faced with the evidence, "only the blind and the deaf could be unaware of the contrast between Stalinism and Leninism."^[82]

A similar analysis is present in more recent works such as those of Graeme Gill, who argues that "[Stalinism was] not a natural flow-on of earlier developments; [it formed a] sharp break resulting from conscious decisions by leading political actors."^[83] However, Gill notes that "difficulties with the use of the term reflect problems with the concept of Stalinism itself. The major difficulty is a lack of agreement about what should constitute Stalinism."^[84] Revisionist historians such as Sheila Fitzpatrick have criticized the focus upon the upper levels of society and the use of Cold War concepts such as totalitarianism which have obscured the reality of the system.^[85]

Legacy

Pierre du Bois argues that the cult was elaborately constructed to legitimize his rule. Many deliberate distortions and falsehoods were used.^[86] The Kremlin refused access to archival records that might reveal the truth, and key documents were destroyed. Photographs were altered, and documents were invented.^[87] People who knew Stalin were forced to provide "official" accounts to meet the ideological demands of the cult, especially as Stalin himself presented it in 1938 in *Short Course on the History of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)*, which became the official history.^[88] Historian David L. Hoffmann sums up the consensus of scholars: "The Stalin cult was a central element of Stalinism, and as such, it was one of the most salient features of Soviet rule. [...] Many scholars of Stalinism cite the cult as integral to Stalin's power or as evidence of Stalin's megalomania."^[89]

However, after Stalin's death in 1953, his successor Nikita Khrushchev repudiated his policies and condemned Stalin's cult of personality in his Secret Speech to the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 as well as instituting de-Stalinization and relative liberalization (within the same political framework). Consequently, some of the world's communist parties who previously adhered to Stalinism abandoned it, and to a greater or lesser degree adopted the positions of Khrushchev. Others such as the Chinese Communist Party chose to split from the Soviet Union, resulting in the Sino-Soviet split. The ousting of Khrushchev in 1964 by his former party-state allies has been described as a Stalinist restoration by some, epitomized by the Brezhnev Doctrine and the apparatchik/nomenklatura "stability of cadres", lasting until the period of glasnost and perestroika in the late 1980s and the fall of the Soviet Union.



Stalin statue in front of the Joseph Stalin Museum, Gori

Maoism and Hoxhaism

Mao Zedong famously declared that Stalin was 70% good, 30% bad. Maoists criticized Stalin chiefly regarding his view that bourgeois influence within the Soviet Union was primarily a result of external forces, to the almost complete exclusion of internal forces, and his view that class contradictions ended after the basic construction of socialism. However, they praised Stalin for leading the Soviet Union and the international proletariat, defeating fascism in Germany and his anti-revisionism.^[90]

Taking the side of the Chinese Communist Party in the Sino-Soviet split, the People's Socialist Republic of Albania remained committed at least theoretically to its own brand of Stalinism (Hoxhaism) for decades thereafter under the leadership of Enver Hoxha. Despite their initial cooperation against "revisionism", Hoxha denounced Mao as a revisionist, along with almost every other self-identified communist organization in the world, resulting in the Sino-Albanian split. This had the effect of isolating Albania from the rest of the world as Hoxha was hostile to both the pro-American and pro-Soviet spheres of influence as well as the Non-Aligned Movement under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito, whom Hoxha had also denounced.

Trotskyism

Trotskyists argue that the Stalinist Soviet Union was neither socialist nor communist, but rather a bureaucratized degenerated workers' state—that is, a non-capitalist state in which exploitation is controlled by a ruling caste which, although not owning the means of production and not constituting a social class in its own right, accrued benefits and privileges at the expense of the working class. Trotsky believed that the Bolshevik Revolution needed to be spread all over the globe's working class, the proletarians for world revolution. However, after the failure of the revolution in Germany, Stalin reasoned that industrializing and consolidating Bolshevism in Russia would best serve the proletariat in the long run. The dispute did not end until Trotsky's assassination in his Mexican villa by Stalinist assassin Ramón Mercader in 1940.^[91]

Max Shachtman, one of the principal Trotskyist theorists in the United States at the time, argued that the Soviet Union had evolved from a degenerated worker's state to a new mode of production which he called bureaucratic collectivism, whereby orthodox Trotskyists considered the Soviet Union an ally gone astray. Shachtman and his followers thus argued for the formation of a Third Camp opposed equally to both the Soviet and capitalist blocs. By the mid-20th century, Shachtman and many of his associates such as Social Democrats, USA identified as social democrats rather than Trotskyists, while some ultimately abandoned socialism altogether and embraced neoconservatism. In the United Kingdom, Tony Cliff independently developed a critique of state capitalism that resembled Shachtman's in some respects, but it retained a commitment to revolutionary communism.^[92]



British prime minister Winston Churchill, United States president Franklin D. Roosevelt and Stalin, the Big Three Allied leaders during World War II at the Yalta Conference in February 1945

Other interpretations

Some historians and writers such as German Dietrich Schwanitz^[93] draw parallels between Stalinism and the economic policy of Tsar Peter the Great, although Schwanitz in particular views Stalin as "a monstrous reincarnation" of him. Both men wanted Russia to leave the western European states far behind in terms of development. Both largely succeeded, turning Russia into Europe's leading power. Others compare Stalin with Ivan the Terrible because of his policies of oprichnina and restriction of the liberties of common people.

Stalinism has been considered by some reviewers as a form of "red fascism".^[94] Although fascist regimes were ideologically opposed to the Soviet Union, some of them positively regarded Stalinism as evolving Bolshevism into a form of fascism. Benito Mussolini himself positively reviewed Stalinism as having transformed Soviet Bolshevism into a Slavic fascism.^[95]



Gulag Museum in Moscow, founded in 2001 by historian Anton Antonov-Ovseyenko

British historian Michael Ellman has written that mass deaths from famines are not a "uniquely Stalinist evil", noting that throughout Russian history, famines and droughts have been a common occurrence, including the Russian famine of 1921–22 (which occurred before Stalin came to power). He also notes that famines were widespread throughout the world in the 19th and 20th centuries in countries such as India, Ireland, Russia and China. Ellman compared the behavior of the Stalinist regime vis-à-vis the Holodomor to that of the British government (towards Ireland and India) and the G8 in contemporary times, arguing that the G8 "are guilty of mass manslaughter or mass deaths from criminal negligence because of their not taking obvious measures to reduce mass deaths" and that the "behaviour [of Stalin] was no worse than that of many rulers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries".^[96]

David L. Hoffmann raised the issue of whether Stalinist practices of state violence derived from socialist ideology. Placing Stalinism in an international context, Hoffman argued that many forms of state interventionism used by the Stalinist government, including social cataloguing, surveillance and concentration camps, predated the Soviet regime and originated outside of Russia. Hoffman further argued that technologies of social intervention developed in conjunction with the work of 19th-century European reformers and were greatly expanded during World War I, when state actors in all the combatant countries dramatically increased

efforts to mobilize and control their populations. According to Hoffman, the Soviet state was born at this moment of total war and institutionalized practices of state intervention as permanent features of governance.^[97]

In writing *The Mortal Danger: Misconceptions about Soviet Russia and the Threat to America*, anti-communist and Soviet dissident Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn argued that the use of the term *Stalinism* is an excuse to hide the inevitable effects of communism as a whole on human liberties. He wrote that the concept of *Stalinism* was developed after 1956 by Western intellectuals so as to be able to keep alive the communist ideal. However, the term *Stalinism* was in use as early as 1937 when Leon Trotsky wrote his pamphlet *Stalinism and Bolshevism*.^[98]



Memorial to the victims of political repression in the USSR, in St. Petersburg, made of a boulder from the Solovetsky Islands

Writing two *The Guardian* articles in 2002 and 2006, British journalist Seumas Milne said that the impact of the post-Cold War narrative that Stalin and Hitler were twin evils, therefore communism is as monstrous as Nazism, "has been to relativize the unique crimes of Nazism, bury those of colonialism and feed the idea that any attempt at radical social change will always lead to suffering, killing and failure."^{[99][100]}

Public opinion

In modern Russia, public opinion of Stalin and the former Soviet Union has increased in recent years.^[101] According to a 2015 Levada Center poll, 34% of respondents (up from 28% in 2007) say that leading the Soviet people to victory in World War II was such a great achievement that it outweighed his mistakes.^[102] A 2019 Levada Center poll showed that support for Stalin, who is seen by many Russians as the victor in the Great Patriotic War,^[103] reached a record high in the post-Soviet era, with 51% regarding Stalin as a positive figure, and 70% saying his reign was good for the country.^[104]

Lev Gudkov, a sociologist at the Levada Center, said that "Vladimir Putin's Russia of 2012 needs symbols of authority and national strength, however controversial they may be, to validate the newly authoritarian political order. Stalin, a despotic leader responsible for mass bloodshed but also still identified with wartime victory and national unity, fits this need for symbols that reinforce the current political ideology."^[105]

Some positive sentiment can also be found elsewhere in the former Soviet Union. A 2012 survey commissioned by the Carnegie Endowment found 38% of Armenians concurring that their county "will always have need of a leader like Stalin".^{[105][106]} A 2013 survey by Tbilisi University found 45% of Georgians expressing "a positive attitude" to Stalin.^[107]

See also

- Anti-Stalinist left
- Bibliography of Stalinism and the Soviet Union
- Comparison of Nazism and Stalinism
- Everyday Stalinism
- Juche
- Industrialization in the Soviet Union
- Mass killings under communist regimes
- Soviet Empire
- Stalin's cult of personality

- Stalin's Peasants
- Stalin Society
- Stalinist architecture
- The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia

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Notes

- i. An exact number of negative votes is unknown. In his memoirs, Anastas Mikoyan writes that out of 1,225 delegates, around 270 voted against Stalin and that the official number of negative votes was given as three, with the rest of ballots destroyed. Following Nikita Khrushchev's "Secret Speech" in 1956, a commission of the central committee investigated the votes and found that 267 ballots were missing.
- ii. The scale of Stalin's purge of Red Army officers was exceptional—90% of all generals and 80% of all colonels were killed. This included three out of five Marshals; 13 out of 15 Army commanders; 57 of 85 Corps commanders; 110 of 195 divisional commanders; and 220 of 406 brigade commanders, as well as all commanders of military districts. Carell, P. [1964] 1974.

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